

Treasure of the Blue Mountain



KEVIN'S AMAZING CYBER PET

Colbby

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by

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Chapter 1

The Gentlemen

Captain John Lane peered intently into the gloom. It was dawn on a cold October morning in the year 1817 and the weather was not good. A heavy swell rocked his ship the sloop Mont Bleu.

He and his crew were watching for a signal light from the shore of a cove in Cornwall. A cold wind had been growing stronger all night and chilled even through the heavy woollen coat he was wearing. It was an idle wind that the captain would often refer to as cutting through a body rather than going around.

He shivered and tried to lift up his coat collar, although it was already as high as it would go around his neck. His cocked hat, the only piece of clothing that could be classed as an item of uniform, was pulled tightly down on his head by its point.

His long sea boots resounded on the wooden planking of the deck as he paced impatiently to and fro. Every few moments he would extend his spyglass and then snap it to again, as if it would help to bring about the signal.

His crew knew this mood and left him alone lest they became the object of his impatience.

The sails flapped loosely in the wind as the shrouds had been slackened to slow the vessel down as he sought the one place between two fingers of rock from where a signal light could be seen.

The growing light revealed heavy rain clouds. The Captain raised his weather beaten face as he estimated how much time they would have before the storm hit. Just then one of his crew gave a shout.

“There!”

A single brief flash of light followed by a pause, then two more flashes.

“That’s it. Answer them.”

The lantern from the ship gave the same one flash then two.

“Let go the hook.”

The captain gave his orders although the crew knew what to do. They had made this same journey many times before.

The light anchor was dropped overboard, it would hold long enough to unload. Now the longboat would be rowed out from the shore and he could be on his way before the weather got any worse. It would require more than one trip, because of the number of barrels, and the Captain didn’t like waiting at anchor for too long.

The anchor took hold and the sloop swung on its cable with the port side and stern facing the shore.

Deakin, the innkeeper, had given the signal and now watched the sloop drop anchor. He gave the order for his men to row out for the first load while he stayed hidden in a cave that was their base. The fewer men rowing, the more cargo could be brought ashore. Two trips should do it he thought, as the longboat left the cave. He had to watch the tide. At low water there wasn’t

enough depth in the channel leading to the cave for a heavily laden boat and, at high tide, the boat couldn't get in because of the overhang of the cliff.

Deakin owned a local inn and also supplied other outlets. His partnership with Captain Lane was a very profitable one. The Captain brought the goods from France where he lived as a Frenchman and Deakin sold them. With the occasional smuggled passenger who wanted to travel between the two countries unseen, they were both growing very rich.

Deakin was a large rough man with a face that carried the marks of the many fights he had been involved in. A few years older than the Captain, his appearance would frighten most men and make them think twice before crossing him.

He didn't care what the cargo was, whether it was wine or people, so long as it paid well it was all the same to him.

The longboat pulled alongside the sloop. Captain Lane had brought his vessel as close as he could to the shore to cut down the journey time between trips. Ropes were thrown and made fast and the first barrel lowered.

The rope slings were just being pulled up for the next barrel when the Captain heard a loud explosion down by the water line. He rushed to the ship's rail and looked down. The bow of the longboat had been blown off and the craft was sinking. Three men were swimming in the water while the fourth man was clearly dead from the blast.

Captain Lane took the scene in at a glance.

"We've been betrayed. Cut the hook and get those men aboard." He didn't want the rowers taken as it meant certain death or deportation. The swimmers were thrown ropes for them to scramble aboard as another shot slammed into the sloop but a little too high.

The ship's rail was smashed into pieces, showering the crew with splinters of wood. The sail began to fill as one of the crew took an axe and chopped through the cable holding the anchor. The sloop began to move.

The Captain took out his spyglass and looked at the cliff top.

Redcoats. He counted a dozen or more. They had set cannon on the cliff at point blank range. If they had gone for the sloop first instead of the longboat he would have been blown out of the water, or maybe they were just bad shots. A third shot crashed into the stern but fortunately into the cabin and not the rudder. In another two minutes they would be out of range of the cannon.

King George's men were now on the beach firing their muskets. Deakin, still in the cave, decided it was time to make himself scarce. He knew that the soldiers would begin a search when it grew light enough for them to climb over the finger of rock hiding the cave. He approached a section of the wall in the rear of the cave. It was a concealed door where the cargo was taken after landing. It also offered an escape route from any attack via the cave. He passed through and closed the door behind him. At a casual glance it looked like part of the cave wall to anyone who didn't know it was there. He felt safer with the door closed as it was made of heavy timbers clad with stone and a good hour would be needed to break it down, and then behind him were a series of passages where an army could hide if need be. He paused and tried to think of a plan.

What worried him was the fact that the revenue men, with the troopers, knew about the cave and also that they were waiting on the cliff for the sloop that very morning. That could only mean someone had talked. Because of the inns, a few people knew of the smuggling but only his men knew of the cave with its passage. He therefore decided to wait and see if they were discovered.

The soldiers arrived shortly afterwards when it was light enough to climb over the rocks. It would be a hard climb in their high boots and carrying a long musket. The water in the channel was now low enough for them to wade and gain access to the cave. The Redcoats arrived in the darkened cave. Deakin drew his pistol from the wide leather belt he wore. He primed it and drew the hammer back. The first man through would get it, he thought. He waited for the first sign of the door being attacked.

“‘Ere ‘arry, got a light?” Deakin heard one man say to his mate. He cursed under his breath for having left the lamp. A scrape of flint and then a flood of light as the lantern gave out a soft yellow glow.

Soon a flicker of light came through a tiny crack at the edge of the door. He backed away and raised his pistol. The soldiers conducted their search but the door remained closed. All they found was the loading area with some rope and the mooring ring for the longboat. The lamp was extinguished, the men were leaving and he was safe for the time being. He heard a splash as the soldiers re-entered the water and he gently opened the door a crack. All was quiet. Upon entering the cave, he was just in time to see the last man climbing out of the water and up over the rocks. He was alone.

All firing had ceased. Deakin sat down and began to reason things out. If the soldiers didn't know of the passages, then it wasn't one of his men who had talked. They must have guessed that a delivery was due or had waited days until it had arrived. He was safe for the moment but they knew who he was and would be waiting for him back at the inn. He would have to make plans to get to France.

A half-mile away from the coast, a rock face in an old quarry began to move. Deakin stepped out of a door and closed it again.

This was the other secret entrance. The cargo was brought out of the cave through this door. Having closed the door it looked just like part of the quarry's solid rock face. Deakin had spent hours constructing this door and making safe the passages behind. A quarry man had told him of the passage just before they abandoned the workings. Intrigued, Deakin had followed the mine passage down to a place where he could clearly hear the surf. He realised that if he broke through it would make a perfect base.

Captain Lane knew someone who would advance money for a ship and an inn without asking too many questions and their partnership had begun.

Deakin took a path leading from the quarry and away from the cliffs, going further inland until it met a little lane. His inn was some three miles down this lane. Everything appeared quiet but there could be a roadblock or a sentry. Creeping from bush to bush he took nearly two hours to cover the distance.

The inn was a large, rambling stone built house with stables at the side, in the distant past it had started life as a yeoman's farmhouse. Strong oak beams held a stone slated roof over a large open plan hall. It was an ideal inn, especially as it now stood at a crossroads, although the roads were just dirt tracks. One led to Exeter many miles away and the other was the old quarry track and coast road. When he arrived it was still very early but there were signs of activity outside.

The soldiers were looking for him. That proved they knew who he was.

Deakin could only watch from the safety of some bushes until the soldiers left two hours later. Even then he approached with extreme caution until at last a lamp was placed in an upstairs window.

This was their private signal for when it was safe. Quickly crossing the last patch of open ground he entered the door being held open by his wife Bertha, a huge woman almost matching

him in size, whose fist had been known to knock a man cold. She greeted him with a warning the revenue men were seeking him. He explained what had happened and made preparations to leave. Just then a loud banging echoed through the inn.

“That’s the lad,” said Bertha.

“Good, tell him to saddle the mule with the panniers and then go up the lane and keep watch.” The inn’s lad was given his instructions by Bertha and put on lookout to give early warning of anyone’s approach.

“Have you eaten?” Bertha enquired.

“Haven’t had any time. Its taken ages to come down the lane there are soldiers everywhere. Someone must have talked.”

“What of the men?”

“Don’t know, the longboat’s had it but I think Captain Lane picked them up.”

Bertha worked as she listened. The large frying pan was filled with rashers of ham and plenty of eggs and homemade pie was brought out ready to be packed for Deakin’s journey. Bertha liked a good meal and saw to it that her man was well fed.

She cooked the huge breakfast while he packed a few clothes into a bag.

“I’ll stay at the cave until things quieten down and then make my way over to Dover and get passage to France and see Captain Lane. You see the lawyer and sell the inn. Then as soon as you can you must join me in France, you know the address. If anybody asks, I sailed on the Blue Mountain and you don’t know where I am.” Bertha nodded. She understood the position they were in and, if caught, it would mean the hangman.

Deakin ate his meal, finished his packing and then lifted the trapdoor leading to the cellar. Down below were casks of ale and bottles of wine. At one end two very large casks were on a rack. He descended and walked to the second of the casks. He noted some empty bottles lying around; the soldiers had helped themselves while searching.

At the cask he took hold of the iron band and gave it a turn. The rear of the cask swung open on hinges. Inside were canvas bags. He pulled them out one by one and placed them into two sacks. When they were full he carried them back upstairs. They were very heavy and made a clinking sound when put down.

“Have you got it all?” Bertha asked. Deakin nodded.

“I’ll leave you some to help with expenses until you can sell.” He opened one of the sacks and took out a bag that contained gold coins, the proceeds of their smuggling over the year’s that he’d saved for such a time as this, and gave Bertha a handful.

“I’ll have to take the mule, the sacks are too heavy to carry but I’ll send it back with the lad.” At the barn the sacks were strapped to the panniers of his mule. For the time being it was too dangerous to be seen abroad in daylight. He couldn’t stay at the inn and there were too many soldiers and revenue men around to travel in safety. The only safe places were the passages behind the cave. After saying his goodbye to Bertha, he set off back up the lane, this time leading the mule. He caught up with the inn’s lad keeping watch.

“All clear” he asked?

The boy pointed to two travellers in the distance. After they were out of sight Deakin ordered the lad to go ahead to give warning.

“And keep your eyes peeled. The place is overrun with Redcoats.” The lad did as he was told.

The day was now bright enough to see a good distance even though the sky was heavy with rain clouds. After an hour they were nearing the quarry by the cliffs. The going was easier with

the mule taking the weight and the boy ahead keeping watch. Suddenly, the lad raised his arm and ducked down into some bushes. Deakin led the mule around a large rock and waited. He heard the noise of men on the path and peered out through a cleft in the rock. Redcoats. A section of men led by an officer, four of them carrying a litter. On the litter lay the body of a man covered in a sheet.

It was one of his men from the longboat.

One thing was certain; if the man was fully covered then he was surely dead already and couldn't give any information to the soldiers. The party moved out of sight and the lad signalled the all clear.

When Deakin caught up with the lad he unloaded the mule, gave the boy a gold coin and told him to take the mule back and forget where he'd been. There's no fodder in the passages for a mule and to leave it outside may give the game away. Also the boy didn't know of the passage and Deakin thought it best not to tell him just in case he was questioned. He hid the bags of gold coins and shouldered the pack of food, first making sure the lad wasn't watching him, and then he made his way to the concealed doorway in the quarry. It opened easily and led into a dark passage. After closing the door Deakin paused and listened. If he had been observed going into the cave then now would be the time for that observer to come and try the door. All appeared quiet. Deakin picked up his pack and walked into the passage.

A few yards in a row of pegs hammered into the rock to serve as coat pegs.

On one of the pegs a lantern was hung. It was left away from the doorway to ensure no light from it showed through to the outside. Deakin lit it. Its soft yellow light flicked on the passage walls, throwing shadows as he made his way through until he came to a suite of rooms chiselled out of the living rock. The first room was for stores. The second was the stables for the pack mules, empty at the moment. The third room was storage and ships' spares and then two more provided living quarters, a kitchen backed by a room with bunks for sleeping. Deakin threw his pack onto the kitchen table and then continued down to the sea cave.

All seemed quiet but he decided to check. The door was opened a crack and he paused and listened. No sound reached him except the sea. After entering he checked the rocks to see if the soldiers had left a sentry but they were clear. He reasoned he was safe for the time being. Back in the kitchen a fire was lit in the little stove. The light smoke disappeared into cracks in the rock ceiling and would disperse before reaching the outside. It was now mid morning and far too late to do anything but rest. The money would have to wait until dark to be collected. He yawned; it had been a long night.

Instead of using the sleeping quarters he took some blankets into the kitchen and made a bed by the fire.

Soon he was fast asleep. He awoke later that evening. The lantern was burning low he took a spill and lit a second lantern from the first then refilled the first with lamp oil and trimmed the wick. A quick check of his pocket watch showed it had just turned four and was still too early to go out. He would prepare a meal first, his pack held enough food for two weeks. After eating, the next task would be to retrieve the gold and bring it into the safety of the passages but that could wait. Wrapping his blanket around his shoulders he settled down in front of the fire and dozed.

Later, when it was dark, he made his way to the door and relocated the lantern onto its peg. The sound of wind and rain greeted him at the door. This would suit him, as nobody would be about in that weather, at least no innocent travellers.

With his cloak wrapped tightly around him he stepped out into the night, ever watchful for the soldiers.

It was a full gale. The rain beat down with a fury. The wind tore at his jacket and scarf, threatening to tear them away. He had no idea how long it had been blowing but thought it had threatened to rain last night. The bags were as he had left them. Loading up what he could carry, it was back to the cave again. It took three more trips before all the bags were collected. A chest in the corner would serve as a coffer until it was safe again to bring the mule for travelling to the coast. A pool of water was gathering from where he had taken off his outer garments and hung them over a chair near the fire. All he could do now was to wait until the soldiers had left and then begin his journey to France

Four days later Bertha Deakin arrived at the inn from her visit to the lawyer. The inn had been valued and the legal work was in progress. Until a buyer was found the lawyer would take charge as Bertha wanted to be on her way in a week's time, even if it meant closing down. She drove into the yard in a light carriage with a single horse to be met by soldiers. The wife of the man killed in the longboat had talked. She told the revenue men all about the smuggling, who was involved and who the leaders were, naming Bertha Deakin. An officer strode towards her carriage.

"Identify yourself," he demanded brusquely, "and state your business here."

"I'm the wife of the man who owns this inn. What are you doing here?"

Bertha was told to stop and get down from the carriage as she was under arrest.

She saw one small chance to get away and raised her whip. The whip cracked down on the beasts back as Bertha tried to flee. The horse tried to bolt but was being held at the bridle by one of the soldiers. As the horse reared, Bertha threw back her cloak to reveal a small pistol. In one swift movement she raised the pistol and fired. At such close range the effect was deadly. The man holding her horse's bridle fell down with a pistol ball in his head and the horse, now free, ran at full gallop away from the inn. The soldiers were on foot and had no chance of stopping the horse but two revenue men were not. They gave chase. Bertha had a good start but the mounted horsemen were faster and her horse hadn't rested from her trip to the lawyer. A chase began over the moors. The pistol was a small pocket model flintlock and held just one shot and, as Bertha could not stop to reload, was useless. Her only hope was to get far enough ahead and lose the pursuers amongst the small hills and rocks. She took a quick glance behind and saw that the horses were close and gaining on her. She lashed at the horse, trying to gain a little more speed, but the beast had already travelled a long way that day and was tired. Soon one of the chasers drew along side and reached for the bridle of her horse. Bertha lashed at him with her whip but to no avail.

The other rider came alongside and levelled his pistol. The chase had ended. A week had gone by before Deakin ventured onto the cliff top to survey the surrounding countryside for soldiers. All seemed quiet and peaceful. Perhaps this may be a good time to start his journey to France. He would need the mule again along with further supplies and also he would like to know what progress Bertha had made in disposing of the inn.

When it became dark he prepared a meal, checked his pocket watch, which showed 6pm. It was time for him to get some sleep before his night trip. The little stove was banked up and Deakin settled down, drawing his blankets around.

After sleeping he awoke and again checked his watch, it was now after midnight. The meal prepared earlier was quickly eaten, his thick winter coat was buttoned tightly around him and he

stepped out of the secret door at the end of the passage. Time enough to get to the inn and back, load the gold and be on his way at dawn he thought.

The lane was dark and quiet. Even so Deakin took his time to travel the short distance as every few yards he would stop and listen. When the inn finally came into sight it was just 2am. With his pistol primed and cocked he made his way around the rear and tapped on the door.

The inn was locked and in darkness. No one answered him. He knocked again a little louder but once again no reply.

Bertha must be sleeping but the lad should have heard as he usually slept at the inn when Deakin was away.

"I'll get the mule," he said to himself.

At the stable the door was open. That's odd, he thought. Deakin pulled the door wide and peered into the gloom.

"The mule's gone!" He exclaimed with surprise. "Who's taken my mule?" Without it he couldn't hope to move the bags of money. Now upset, Deakin hammered on the door of the inn but nobody answered.

He circled to the front and beat his fist on the door there.

"Surely they'll hear that." The noise echoed through the building but no answering call came. The place was deserted.

"I'll have to find the boy." Deakin was cursing his luck and muttering to himself as he made his way up the lane, confident no one was around.

A while later he was outside the cottage where the lad lived. A knock on the door was answered. The wooden bar across the door was withdrawn and there stood the lad in his nightshift rubbing the sleep from his eyes. The lad told him of going to the inn to find only the soldiers there. They told him the place was closed and he saw nothing of Bertha but the men were talking about a shooting and an arrest but he had no idea whom it was.

Ben Riley's wife will know, I'll go there, thought Deakin. Ben was one of his men in the longboat. He left the lad to go back to bed and set off to the coast and Ben's cottage.

He was late in reaching the cottage, having had to hide, and proceeded with caution. Dawn was coming and soon the lanes wouldn't be safe for him. He knocked on Ben's door. A voice inside asked,

"Who's there?"

"It's me, Deakin." A pause and then from the inside of the cottage came a whispering.

"Wait a minute," replied Mrs Riley. A moment later a scraping sound from the side of the cottage caught his attention. Walking to the corner and peering round he almost bumped into a soldier still only half dressed but with his musket levelled. Deakin ducked and at the same time lunged at the man.

A flash and bang from the musket. The lunge had pushed the barrel up into the air and the ball had passed harmlessly over his shoulder. The man fell over and Deakin took to his heels before he could reload. Now he knew who had talked. Thirty yards up the road a challenge rang out. A second man appeared. Deakin half turned drew his pistol and fired. The man ducked and returned fire. A sharp stab of burning pain on his thigh made him hop for a few steps until he gritted his teeth and carried on running. To stop now would be the end of him. He must escape.

"Got him," the second man shouted. The soldiers had each taken a different way from the window of the cottage from which they'd climbed. They had been left on guard in case anyone came looking for Mrs Ben Riley.

Deakin glanced down at the growing patch of blood staining his clothes. There was nothing he could do at the moment but to flee and get to the cave. A small gully afforded a brief respite from the chase. Deakin stopped for a moment to examine his thigh. A deep gash showed him that the musket ball had not lodged in his leg but it was painful. The cloth scarf around his neck served as a temporary bandage to stem the blood. His belt was used to tie it on and he was on his way again as fast as was possible, at the same time listening for any pursuit. Once at the Quarry he paused to make sure no one was following, and then quickly opened the door of his hide-away.

It had been hard going. His leg hurt and was becoming stiff. Once inside he took off the torn breeches and bathed the wound. The ball had cut a groove in his thigh but had not lodged in his flesh. A dresser in the kitchen held spare clothing for when the rowers got wet but what about food?

Rations were running low, no medicine or bandages were at hand and only his men knew about the passages. Most worrying of all was his missing wife Bertha. Where was she? And who had been arrested. Ben Riley was dead but where were the other three? Water was put on to the stove to boil as he debated whether or not help would come.

If it didn't he would have to make a run for it before the food ran out completely.

“Or a limp for it,” he laughed out loud at his own joke, but it was nearer the truth than he'd care to admit. He'd be lucky if he could walk in the morning. At nightfall he awoke with a start. Reaching for his pocket watch he checked the time; 6.30pm. It would be dark outside. Now was the time to go and find a doctor in a nearby town. His leg was looking an angry red. The wound was becoming infected and needed treatment. It was time to go. Putting his weight onto his good leg he packed a few things into his pack, took a stick to use as a crutch and limped to the entrance. One last check of the food, a little money and he stepped through. After reaching France and recovering from his wound they could always come back for the gold. It should be safe enough for the time being. With his cloak wrapped tightly around him he closed the door, shouldered his pack and limped off into the darkness.

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